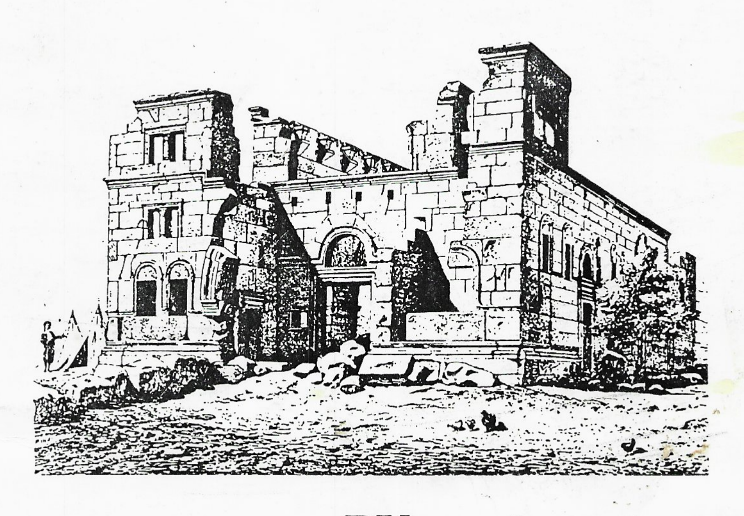
QALB LAUZEH
THE FINEST CHURCH

THE ABANDONED
QIRQ BIZA



BY
FAYEZ KOSSARA

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TRANSLATED BY
M. MARTINI

IDLIB - 2001

Qalb Lauzeh

1- Preface: Idlib, the region, is full of ruins which form third of the ruinsof Syria. The most important ones are the Christian ruins, because this region was the second cradle of Christianity, as Palestine was the first.
Bernaba and Paul, the apostles, were active here about Jesus Christ. This region was attached to Patriarchate of Antioch.
The most important church all over Syria is Qalb Lauzeh Church. It represents a supreme effort of local artistic skill.

Fayez Kossara
1 / 6 / 2001
Idlib - Syria

2– **Location**: The village of "**Qalb Lauzeh**" is 45 k .m north Idlib, 70 k .m west Aleppo, on the mountain "Djebel il – a' la" (= the superior), beside the ruins of **Qirq Biza**.

3- **Name and History**:

The name in Arabic is "**Qalb Lauzeh**", translated as (the heart of almond) (the palace of the resort).

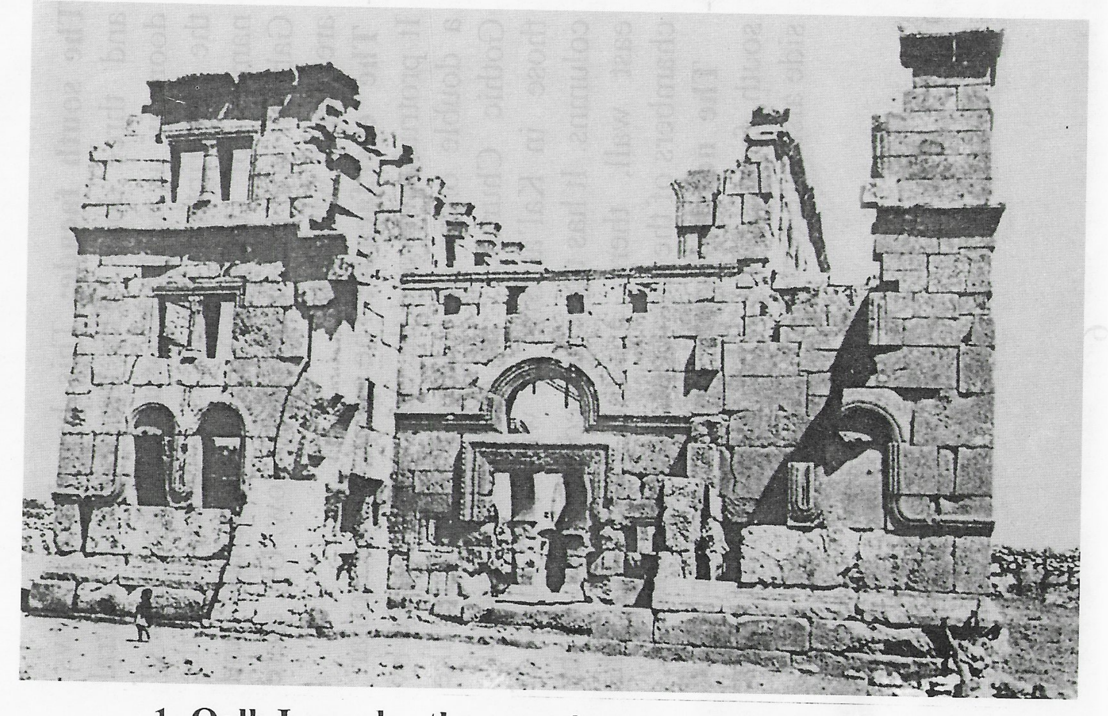
This building was constructed about 480 A. D. Prayers were made here till the twelfth century.

4- **Description,** the exterior of Qalb Lauzeh Church:

A- **The west façade**: The doorway is between two towers, above it there is a large big apse.

The towers are three storeys high, each storey has two windows with molding cornice. All of the windows, except those of the apse, are rectangular. The upper storey is rectangular. Each doorway has a carved frieze and a cornice.

The doorways are uncommonly magnificent in their wealth of moldings and carving.

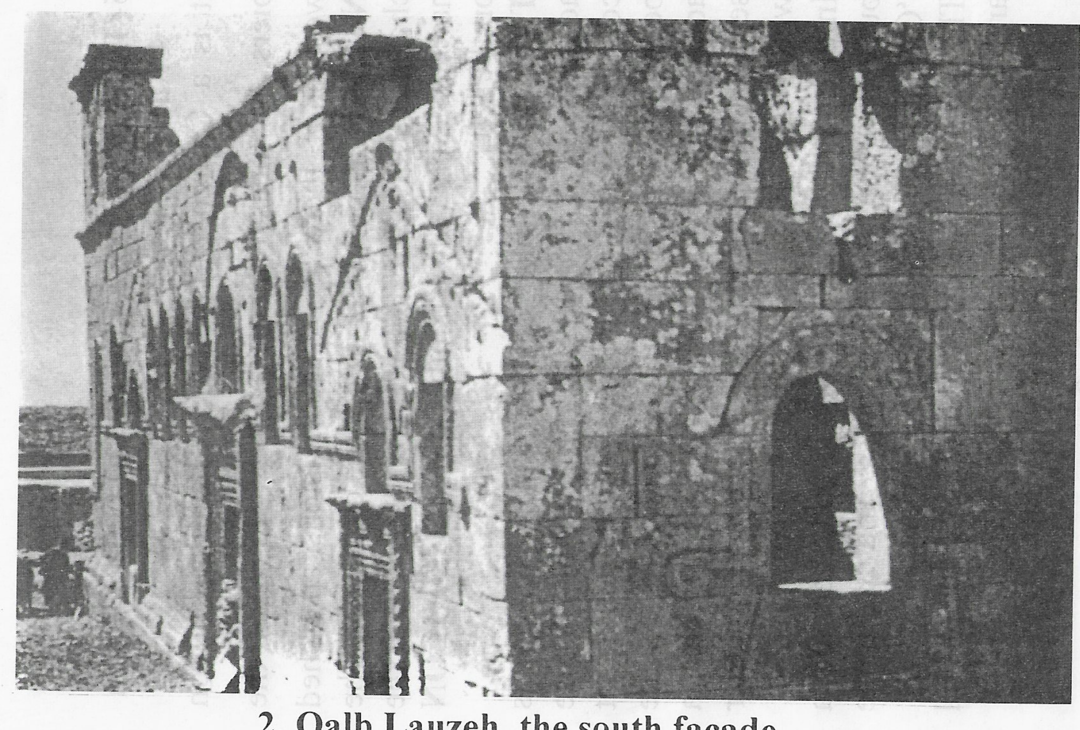


1. Qalb Lauzeh, the west façade of the Basilica

B-The south façade: This has nine windows and three doors. The lintel of the central doorway is richly decorated. In the center of the inscription, There is a cross, and the names of the archangels Michael and Gabriel with their paintings below. Up, there are eleven windows.

C- The east façade: The apse is semicircular. It protrudes beyond the east walls, carried by a double order of columns, which are like Gothic Churches. Its decorations are like those in Kal'at Sim'an with two rows of columns. It has three curved windows. In the east wall, there are the windows of the chambers of the martyrion and diaconicon.

D- The north façade: this is similar to the south façade. The wall and the roof of the side aisle are removed.



2. Qalb Lauzeh, the south façade.

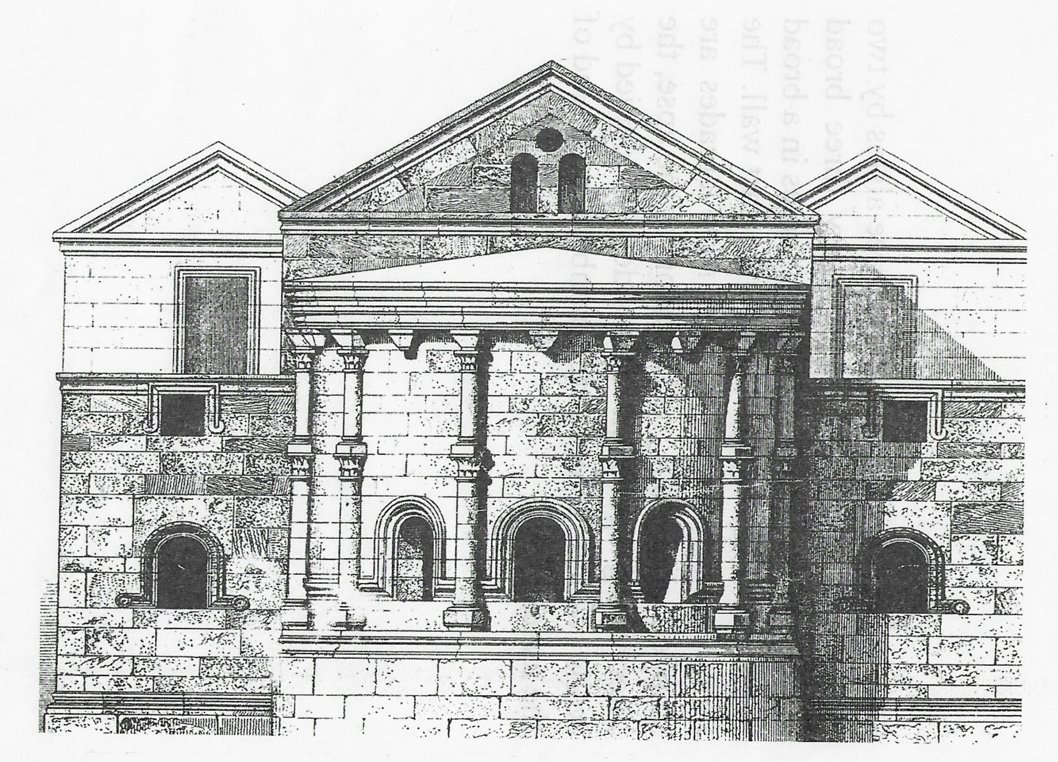
5- **Description, the interior of Qalb Lauzeh Church**:

It is a Church of the type of basilica, built on piers, its measurement is 15 × 25 m. At the west end there are three divisions, an arched **NARTHEX** between two large chambers. The chamber of **MARTYRION** on the right of the narthex , and the chamber of **DIACONICON** on the left.

THE APSE, like that of Kal'at Sim'an, is adorned by a double order of columns. These columns have Corinthian capitals of great beauty. String moldings are freely used for the adornment of windows. They give a semicircular aspect to the lintels of rectangular windows.

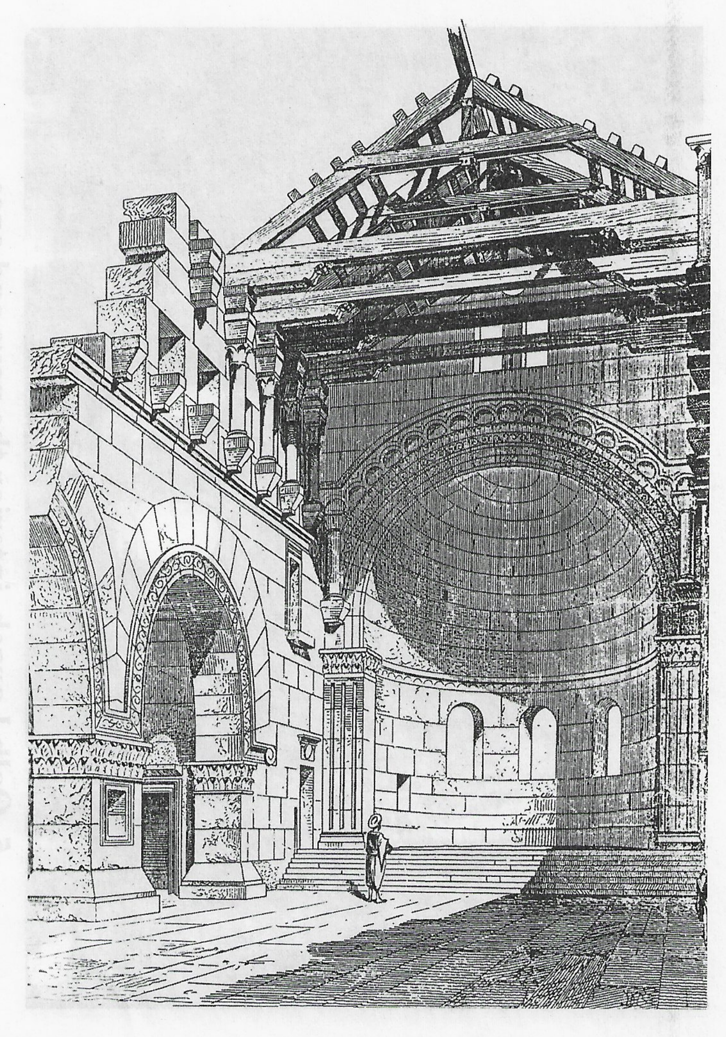
In the middle of the arch of triumph, there are: a bust of the Christ, a cross, and the name "Christus" (in Greek).

There are ambones for the reading of the Gospel and the Epistle.

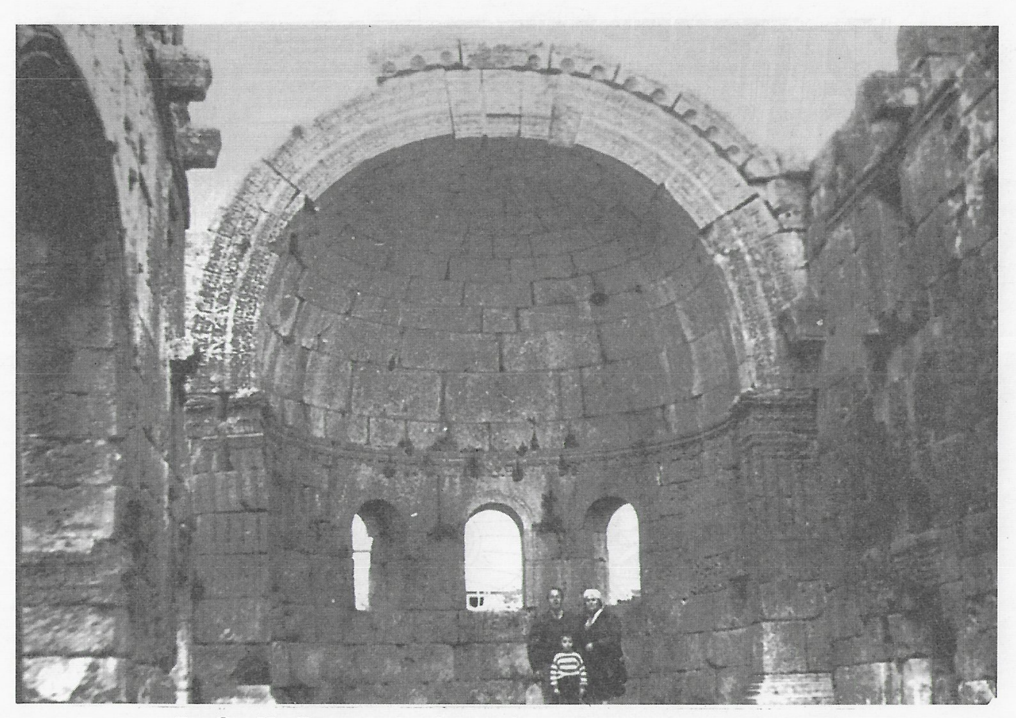


3. Qalb Lauzeh, restoration for the apse, the east façade. (Vogue)

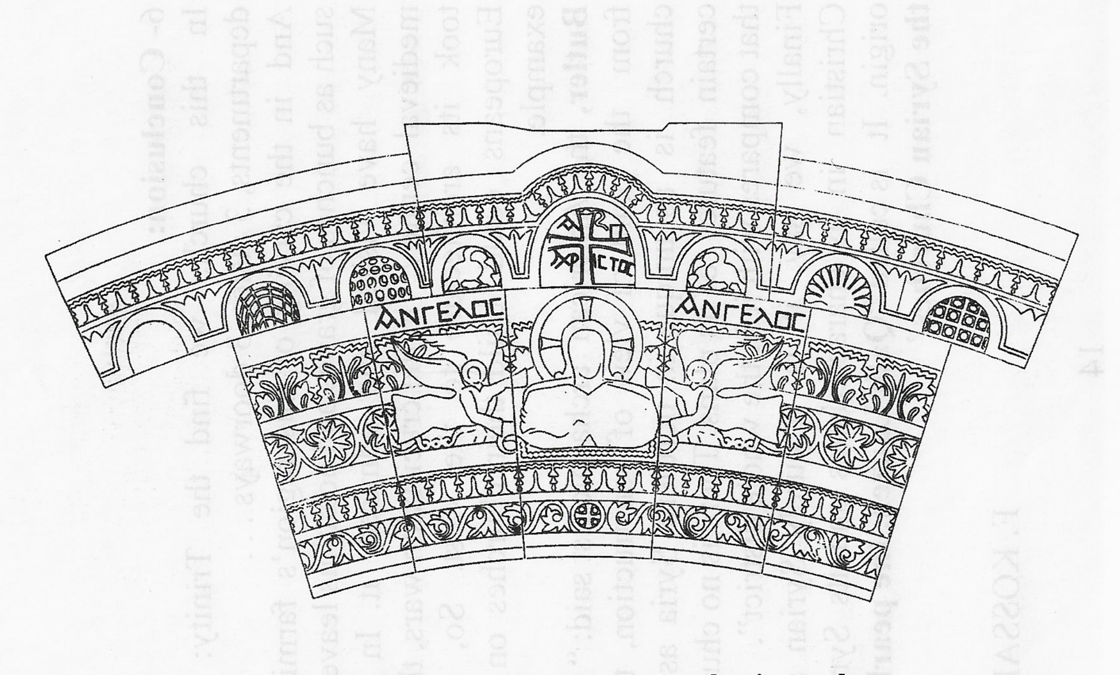
The nave: is divided into three aisles by two piers on either side, which carry three broad arches. The central nave terminates in a broad apse, which protrudes beyond the east wall. The three great arches of the nave arcades are stopped about six meters short of the apse, the intervening space on both sides is occupied by walls which inclose side chambers at the end of the aisles.



4. Qalb Lauzeh, the nave, ruins of the roof (Vogué 1862



5. Qalb Lauzeh, interior the nave and apse.



6. Qalb Lauzeh, the arch of triumph.

6- Conclusion:

In this church, we find the Trinity: 19 departments, 3 aisles, 3 doorways . . .

And in the carving of this region's farming, such as bunches of grapes and acanthus leaves.

Many have visited and admired it. In the medieval century, in the crucifixion wars, they took its architecture to the west. So, the Europeans could build their churches on its example.

Butler, the American archaeologist said: " . . . from the point of view of construction, this church is as unique in northern Syria as in certain features of its plans. There is no church that compares with it in the whole district".

Finally, we say, it is a purely Syrian art, Christian in its characteristics and its Syrian origin. It is called "**Qalb Lauzeh, the pearl of the Syrian Churches**"

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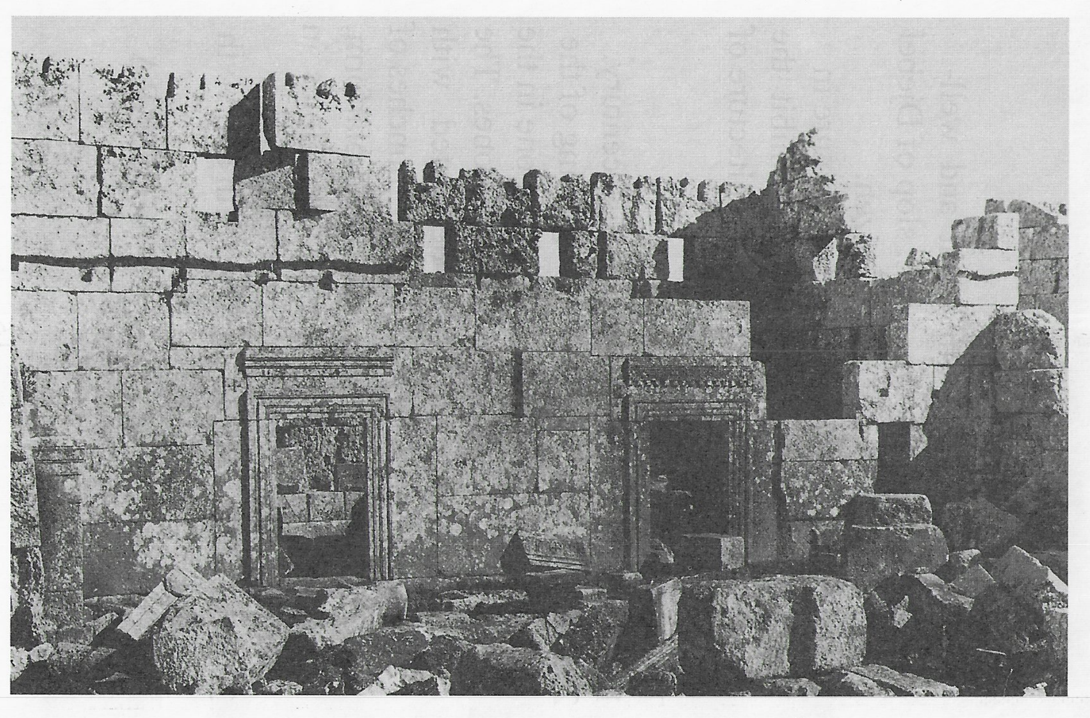
Qirq Biza

- **Qirq Biza**: is an important and well-preserved ruined town on E. slop of Djebel il- A'la, 1 K. m. from Qalb Lauzeh.
- Its buildings represent the architecture in Northern Central Syria, which exhibit the characteristics of the religious architecture of the fourth century.

They are:

1. A villa related to the end of third century.
2. A small church related to beginning of the fourth century. It is the oldest one in the region. There are many carved stones. The door lintels are often decorated with geometrical designs, or with bunches of grapes. A stone seat on a raised platform, which was used by a bishop. Holes in stones may contain relics of martyrs.
3. Two villas related to the fifth and sixth century.

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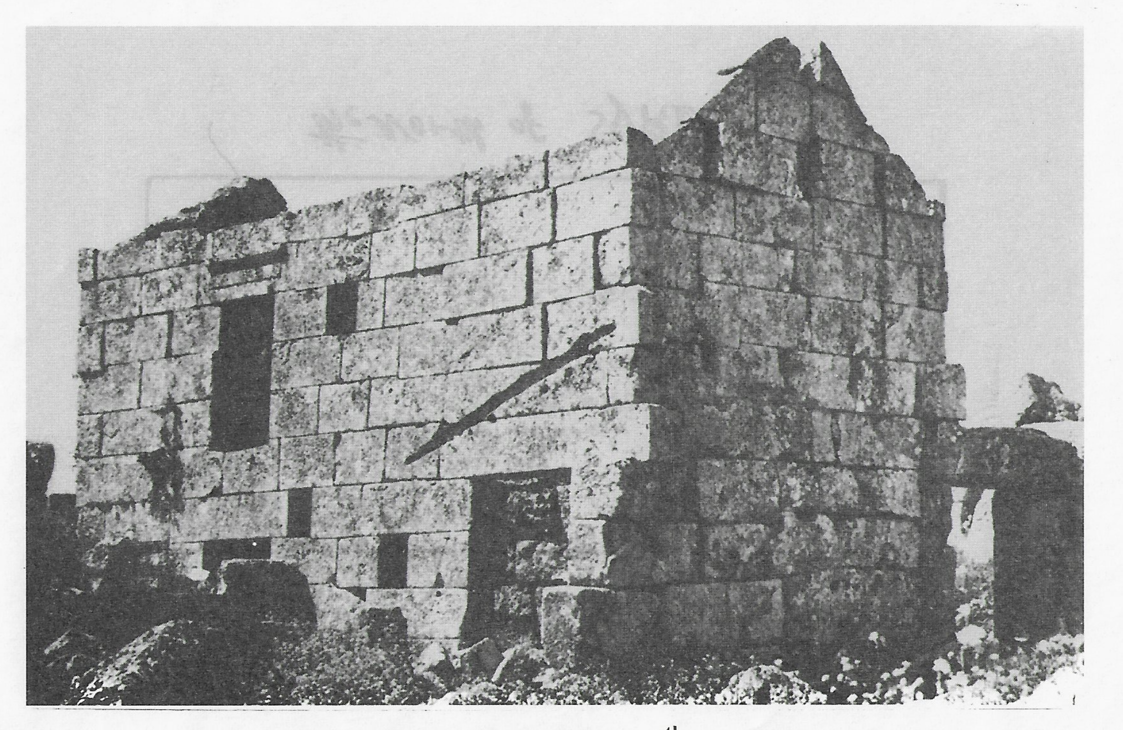
7. Qirq Biza, the south façade.



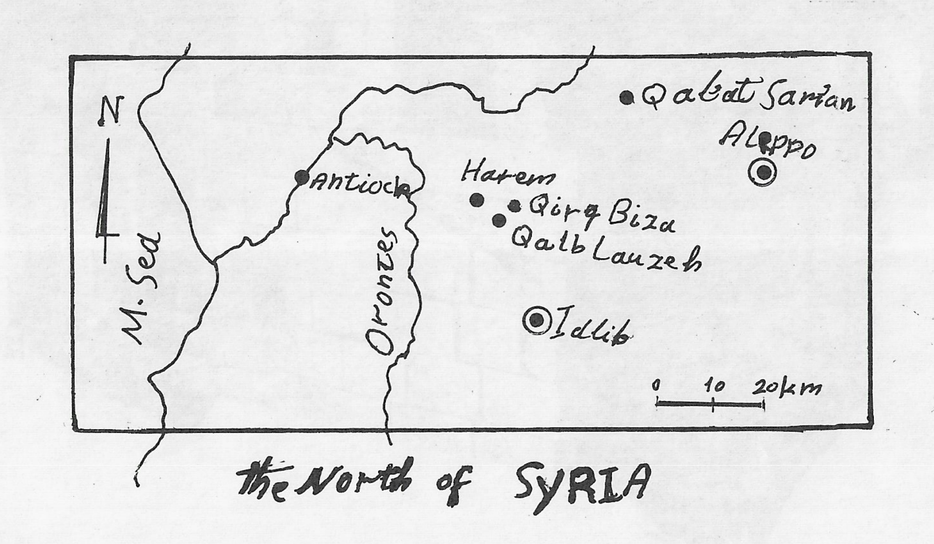
8. Qirq Biza, the bema of the church.



9. Qirq Biza, the recluse.



10. Qirq Biza, Villa, 5th century.



the North of SYRIA



الطبعة الاولى ٢٠٠١
رقم الموافقة : ٦٠٩٤٣
تاريخ : ٢٠٠١/٧/٢

دار الضاد للطباعة والنشر
هاتف ٢٢٢٧٥٣٢